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ABSTRACT

In Quebec, English is taught as a second language to four groups of people: French-speaking Canadians; immigrants; Indians and Eskimos; and foreign students. The first group, in contrast to the others, is not integratively or instrumentlly motivated. They are not submitting to anglicization in North America nor are they being required to know English for either school or work. Both the federal and provincial governments have given financial, technical, and administrative encouragement to TESL. However, Quebec's insistence on sovereignty in education, especially in language teaching, makes federal funding of ESL programs a sensitive matter. Other pressing problems are the lack of extensive retraining programs for teachers, the absence of publicity campaigns to instruct the public, and the failure of teachers to prepare students for English language learning. Increased communication between governments, ministries, school boards, teachers, training institutions, universities, parents and students would be a breakthrough toward solving some of the perennial problems. Also badly needed are centers for language learning, such as established recently by the Universiy of Ottawa, where research into language learning and teaching, teacher training, materials development and information dissemination can be centralized and coordinated. (AMM)

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Some Problems in the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Quebec

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In Quebec English is taught as a second language to four groups of people. They are, in descending order of numbers: (1) French-speaking Canadians; (2) immigrants; (3) native peoples, both Indians and Eskimos; (4) and foreign students. We will consider primarily the problems involved in TESL for French-speaking Canadians. The other three groups, although faced with many of the same problems, differ from the French-speaking group. Immigrants, in the majority of cases, have decided to learn English because they find themselves in North America where English is essential for employment and for mobility. With these instrumental and integrative motivations, the immigrants learn English, even though few specialized programs in ESL are available in English schools. The native peoples have traditionally been subject to anglicization by the federal government. Foreign students, who are usually in Quebec temporarily, often find special programs available for them in the universities, or, at least, they find sympathetic guidance in pursuing their projects or their studies in English universities and colleges. Their motivation is instrumentally very high. The French-speaking Canadians in Quebec, however, are neither integratively nor instrumentally motivated. They are not submitting to anglicization in North America nor are they being required to know English for either school or work.

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What governmental support is being given to TESL in Quebec?

Both the federal and provincial governments have given financial, technical and administrative encouragement to TESL. The B and B report and subsequent promises of federal allocations to provinces for language programs are concrete evidence of deep interest on the part of the federal government. However, Quebec's insistence on sovereignty in education, especially in language teaching, makes federal funding of ESL programs a sensitive matter. The federal government has a responsibility to provide basic training in second language for all of its citizens and it must know where its money is going and how it is being spent. The promises of funds have been hopefully received,but long range language programs have not been forthcoming from Quebec. The Provincial Government should be urged to entrust such responsibilities to non-governmental agencies such as the universities and should be ready to give closer support to teacher training courses, research projects in second language learning and work in the development of teaching materials.

Regulation number 4 of the Quebec Ministry of Education, which concerns teacher training and certification, and the Ministry's programs in ESL for primary and secondary schools show some influence of recent research in TESL. In general, as directives, they are quite adequate. The freedom accorded local school boards, although it has produced less centralized, less homogeneous programs, has put the responsibility for enacting legislation at the local level. TESL programs in the primary schools usually begin in grade 5, depending on the availability of specialized staff and parental demands. Few schools have TESL

programs in the first four grades, and few schools delay TESL beyond grade 5, even when the Ministry's conditions are not met. On the surface, at least, governmental support has been available.

The administrators who are responsible for ESL in the school system are often following only the letter of the law in hiring teachers, planing programs and purchasing equipment and materials. They are not especially trained for TESL administration, but, are, in many cases, senior teachers whose preparation consists largely of years of service in the classroom. This experience, while invaluable, is not the sole prerequisite for administering and planning long-range language programs. Administrators and coordinators must be master teachers, and they must be well informed. School boards should encourage them to update themselves by providing release time and pay incentives.

Training programs, however, can only be successful insofar as the training institutions provide programs of consistent high quality. The failure of ESL programs to produce conpetent speakers of English can be traced to the considerable disregard of special training for teachers of ESL. More often than not, the goal of teacher training institutions has been to produce certified candidates. Graduates have entered the TESL field without guarantees of their competence: of their command of English; of their knowledge of linguistics; or of their understanding of the differences and similarities between French and English. Teacher training institutions in Quebec are sorely in need of teachers of ESL. The new laws of the province place additional onus on these institutions to provide more completely certified personnel. We can only hope they will also be competent. The race of teacher training institutions to meet the idealistic requirements of legislators is a problem that is

faced by many nations in many fields of education and especially in second language education. Wholesale importation of teacher trainers is not the solution, nor is the extensive (even though temporary) exportation of trainees an appropriate stopgap measure. The problem must be solved at home through the use of available personnel and facilities. However, the teacher training institutions are not able to meet even current needs because of their own serious deficiencies. There can be little hope of improvement in English language teaching in Quebec without trained teachers. Surely the situation is better than it was 20, even 10 years ago, but there have been so many more demands placed on those responsible for TESL that the improvements appear insignificant. Just as the ministry programs for TESL are quite adequate in design, so are those of teacher training institutions. But like the ministry programs, they are rarely satisfactorily executed.

How are teachers of English or prospective teachers chosen? Often teachers of English speak English well enough, but otherwise have no preparation. No special efforts are being made to attract candidates.

The recent announcement by the Faculté des Sciences de l'Education of the Université de Montréal of an M.A. program in education with a specialization in teaching second languages is encouraging and the program is a long-awaited development in teacher training in the province. However, the program is severely limited in that it can accept only ten candidates per year who already possess undergraduate degrees in English or Linguistics. Laval University's capably directed graduate program in second language teaching has not recruited teachers in any great numbers. Even the licence d'enseignement secondaire (with English specialization) of the University

of Montreal has not had significant effects on TESL. Quebec has been badly in need of a graduate degree in the English language with concentration in English as a second language: a degree which will provide training in both the language, the structure of the language, methodology, materials preparation, and practice teaching. McGill University's newly approved graduate programs are an encouraging development.

Another reason for the failure of the educational system in Quebec to produce speakers of English has been the complete absence of retraining programs for teachers of English. Experienced teachers faced with new materials are often at a loss as to how to use them even when the materials are accompanied by teachers' guides. Many of the teachers have been in the classrooms for years. Some of the teachers have been transferred from teaching other subjects to teaching English because they speak English, have had a course or two and the school needs them. A successful teacher training program requires an extensive teacher retraining program.

Probably most important of all characteristics of teachers, both experienced and new, is the attitude they bring to TESL. Even well prepared teachers, working with the best materials and facilities, cannot succeed, if they do not have the proper motivation. The teachers must be committed to the teaching of English as a second language. Hopefully a certain professionalism is being developed through the establishment of the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics and through theAssociation of Teachers of English of Quebec. ATEQ's committee on ESL has been especially active during thepast year in discussing questions of teacher training, certification and retraining. And certainly, a journal devoted to problems

in TESL in Quebec would be helpful to teachers.

If teachers were aware of the purposes of programs in ESL, they might have greater success. Teaching ESL is not simply teaching a student a practical skill as many would have us believe. If it were, the success in producing speakers of English would be as widespread as the success in teaching people to drive cars or to swim. Nor is TESL a purely academic pursuit. The purpose in TESL is not to aid students in the accumulation of credits or certificates. TESL is helping students to acquire an ability to use English appropriately in native situations. Such an objective requires that teachers bring to the classroom at least the following qualifications: (1) spoken and written competence in English; (2) a knowledge of linguistics; (3) an understanding of the contrasts between French and English; (4) an accurate knowledge of English culture in its many forms, e.g., in literature; (5) training in pedagogy and especially in second language pedagogy. These qualifications can be obtained in the province if a large-scale, widespread program of teacher retraining for ESL is inaugurated. At present the Summer Institute for Teachers of English as a Second Language of Sir George Williams University is the only program available.

Another problem is the scheduling of ESL classes, which often disfavors students and teachers. Because of the nature of ESL, the last periods of the day and even afternoon classes in secondary schools, are usually not practical times. Students are tired after half a day of classes. Language learning is a difficult job demanding not only mental exertion but considerable output of physical energy. Morning classes in ESL might prove a great aid to better learning.

Tied with scheduling, is the time devoted each week to ESL. In Quebec, weekly time devoted to ESL varies from 100 minutes in grades 5 to 7 up to 250 minutes in grades 10 to 12. These times vary from school to school. With this much exposure, startling results should be expected. Although many teachers, some administrators, and many experts agree that a plan of 15- to 20-minute classes 5 times per week on an intensive basis is more effective than 50 minutes twice a week, there are few schools, if any, which have put this plan into practice. Even in the upper secondary grades, 50 minutes of real language learning is exhausting. More careful planning might allow for more profitable use of time and personnel and would, at least, provide a situation directed at the objective of helping pupils learn English.

The teacher-pupil ratios of approximately 1:27 for primary schools and 1:17 for secondary schools are not formulated with special consideration for ESL. These ratios include not only classroom teachers but administrators, guidance personnel and library staff, so that classes at both levels reach between 25 to 35 students. Even plans to break up classes into small homogeneous groups, so that more time might be given to weaker pupils are discouraged, because of scheduling problems, student movement and control, and teacher work-load agreements.

Another serious problem facing teachers and students in ESL is articulation within the Quebec school system. Can a child in grade 6 in Abitibi transfer to grade 6 in Quebec City or Montreal and be assured of a continuing program in ESL? Can a pupil leaving primary school continue his training at the secondary school? Can a pupil change teachers within the same school and be assured he will continue to progress? Can students leaving the CEGEPs be assured of continuing provisions for instruction in ESL at the university level? At the universities interests in letters

and linguistics tend to displace efforts in ESL. Oral English courses have been banished to extension services with the loss of specialists' direction. Do students in the school systems have to face changes in methods and objectives at the whom of administrators, coordinators or teachers? Is special consideration given to students who have had the advantage of extensive experience in the English language? Or is it the case that students often have to begin English over every year?

Are adequate materials and aids available in the schools? Wherever you go in Quebec, you will see the latest and best equipment available, at least in the form of an audio-recording language laboratory. There are secondary schools with video-recorders and tape recorders, with films and projectors and all sorts of dazzling equipment. But, there are few teachers who possess the competence to use most of this equipment, let alone decide what kinds of programs to feed into them. We have all heard teachers say, "We've got a lab, but I don't know what to do with it." Imagine a program in which English This Way[1] is used as a classroom text and the only tapes available are for English 900.[2] Not all the problems with the use of aids are due to teacher inexperience or incompetence; some of them are due to the inflexibility of installations. How many language laboratories can readily be converted into classrooms? How many audio-visual aid systems can be transported from room to room or from floor to floor?

What about texts and materials? It is quite clear that the ordinary teacher of ESL in the primary school or secondary school who teaches 18 or more hours a week and even the professor in a CEGEP with 12 or more classes

in ESL cannot be expected to produce extensive materials. It is often asking too much to expect him to adapt existing materials to his particular needs, since he may not have the technical knowledge necessary. Are there any materials available for teaching English to French-speaking Canadians? One immediately thinks of Living English for French Canadian Students[3], English Grammar: Practice and Review[4] or L'Esprit de la langue anglaise.[5] But these, as the authors admit, present only partia. programs; St. Pierre for the eighth grade, Hirtle for remedial university courses and Sutherland-Cappon for non-beginners who want to perfect their English. There have been many individual efforts but no concentrated, long-range projects such as produced the Corso d'inglese parlato[6] for Italians or the contrastive studies of English and Italian by Agard and di Pietro.[7] We need a contrastive grammar of French and English based on recent linguistic investigations of both languages. We need a multi-level series of texts based on this grammar, that would provide a sequence of graded lessons, and we need a set of supplementary materials in the form of readers, tapes, etc., that follow from the contrastive grammar and complement the pedagogical grammar. The Italian series mentioned above took at least eight years of continued work, and involved hundreds of people, including linguists, teachers, students, administrators and publishers. Individual efforts in materials preparation can never be as successful as large-scale research, testing and cooperation. Producing an English for Today[8] for French-speaking Canadians might take 10 years, even if it were supported lavishly by funding agencies.

External examinations still remain one of the sore spots for teachers of ESL. Because the Ministry of Education continues to require students to pass its examinations, teachers are forced to teach courses to prepare

students for them, even when they know students need and could use other sorts of training. The Quebec Ministry of Education has tried to modify its examination techniques by including a few questions designed to test oral discrimination, but as one teacher remarked the students could answer this type of question for Russian. Obviously, courses oriented to reading and writing are going to remain in vogue if the pressures of the external examinations remain, and certainly, as long as the examinations remain in their present form. However, such external examinations should rapidly be phased out to encourage teachers to develop their own courses. It would be interesting to make a study of the correlation between teacher evaluation of pupils and external evaluation of pupils.

Finally, what about the students? What problems arise because of the learners? What is the importance of intelligence, aptitude or motivation? For some psychological perspectives on these problems the article by Barkman[9] provides a good introduction. Let's consider, for the moment, one student-centered problem: motivation. In a study made by Gardner and Lambert,[10] it was found that students who were instrumentally motivated had less success in learning a second language than those who were integratively motivated. What this indicates is that the usual reasons that teachers give students for studying English - to get better employment, to get better grades, etc. - are not likely to be as powerful in motivating students as are the students' desire to understand the culture of the second language or their desire to identify with the other culture or even their desire to join the other culture. If we consider current public attitudes toward English in Quebec, teachers might do well to encourage the development of integrative motivation

through the presentation of pre-course lectures designed to shape attitudes or at least to present a clearer picture of the English speaking community. It would seem, however, that much of the antagonism that teachers of ESL find especially in secondary school classrooms, stems, not so much from anti-English feelings, but from anti-English course feelings. That is, many of the problems of apathy, of antagonism and of open defiance of teachers could be solved if English were taught better, if students understood what was going on in the classrooms and if they were aware of the purposes of the courses. No one has yet seen bilinguals emerge from the classrooms of the public schools. Such bad results are bad publicity that doesn't fade quickly. Why has there been so much publicity about the new math, about teaching reading by phonetics, about team teaching and about all the other new fads in education? The effectiveness of public information in the promotion of educational programs cannot be denied. A campaign of public information should be directed at parents and beginning students of ESL.

Of all the problems mentioned in this article, the most pressing are the lack of extensive retraining programs for teachers, the absence of publicity campaigns to instruct the public, and the failure of teachers to prepare students for English language learning. Certainly, increased communication between governments, ministries, school boards, teachers, training institutions, universities, parents and students would be a breakthrough toward solving some of the perennial problems. Badly needed, as well, are centers for language learning where research into language learning and teaching, teacher training, materials development, and information dissemination can be centralized and coordinated. The University of Ottawa has recently established just such a center. It

would be enormously helpful if other centers were available in Montreal, Quebec City and other metropolitan areas. Here is a task for the universities.

Footnotes

1. English Language Services. English This Way, New York: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1963-64.

2. English Language Services. English 900, New York: Collier Macmillan Ltd., 1964.

3. St. Pierre, Gaston. Living English for French Canadian Students, 2 vols., Montreal: Editions Beauchemin, 1964-65.

4. Hirtle, Walter. English Grammar: Practice and Review, 2 vols., Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1965-66.

5. Sutherland, Ronald and Cormac Cappon. L'Esprit de la Langue Anglaise, Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1963.

6. Roberts, Paul. Corso d'inglese parlato, 3 vols., New York: Hareourt, Brace and World, 1963-65. Volume 4 is available in mimeographed form from the Centro di Studi Americani, Rome, Italy.

7. Agard, F. and R. Di Pietro. The Grammatical Structures of English and Italian and The Sounds of English and Italian (Contrastive Structure Series), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

8. National Council of Teachers of English. English for Today, 6 vols., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964-66.

9. Barkman, L. Bruce. "Bilingualism and Second-language Learning", McGill Journal of Education (Spring 1969), Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 48-58.

10. Gardner, R. C. and W. E. Lambert, "Motivational Variables in Second-Language Acquisition," Canadian Journal of Psychology, XIII (1959), pp. 266-272.